



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN ANTONIO LAW ENFORCEMENT ARREST TEXAS MEXICAN MAFIA MEMBERS

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton, DEA Special Agent in Charge James D. Craig and Bexar County Sheriff Ralph Lopez announced the indictment against and arrests of 25 San Antonio residents, all of whom are members of the Texas Mexican Mafia or their associates, on federal drug, firearm and money laundering charges.

"These 25 defendants have made heroin trafficking and violence their way of life in the Mexican Mafia. Today they start paying the price. Not only can they no longer sell heroin and cocaine in our communities, but we are taking their dirty money and guns," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

Those arrested this morning include:

Daniel Leza, aka "Gumby", age: 49
Juan Valdez, aka "Fly", age: 38
Fernando Espinoza, aka "Sweet Pea", age: 37
Roger Rodriguez, aka "Flaco" or "Pelon", age: 34
Ricardo Saenz, aka "Cookie Monster", age: 38
Hortencia Flores, aka "Tencha", age: 41
David Merlo, age: 44
Diana Flores Carrasco, aka "Nancy Flores" or
"Nancy Carrasco", age: 38

Mary Elena Flores, aka "Hela Flores", age: 44
Jesse Ramirez, aka "Chuy", age: 32
Sammy Garcia, aka "Spiderman", age: 36
Steve Herrera, age: 23
Cleto Gonzales, age: 51
George Estrada, aka "Primo", age: 50
Rogelio Flores, aka "Boli", age: 42
Terry Morin, aka "Terry Flores", age: 41
Edward Cisneros, age: 31

Eight defendants charged in this indictment were already in custody prior to today. They are:

Jimmy Zavala, aka "Panson" or "Gordo", age: 35
Santos Yanez, aka "Puppet", age: 39
Johnny Garcia-Esparza, aka "Gira", age: 44
Alfredo Munoz, aka "Tiny", age: 44

Albert Delgado, age: 23
Matilde Vallejo, age: 56
Sylvia Gil, age: 44
Daniel Valles, aka "Dirty Dog" or "Dog", age: 40

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A 33-count federal indictment, returned on Wednesday, alleges that for five years beginning in August 1999, the defendants conspired together to: 1) obtain large amounts of heroin and cocaine for further distribution and sale; 2) control the distribution of heroin and cocaine by restricting drug trafficking among non-Texas Mexican Mafia members to those who paid extortion fees or a "tax;" 3) protect "authorized" drug distributors from robbery, violence and competition; and, 4) using violence in all forms and degrees to enforce the Texas Mexican Mafia drug distribution "tax." Upon conviction of the drug conspiracy charge, each defendant faces between ten years and life in federal prison.

During the time of the conspiracy, authorities estimate that the organization was responsible for distributing over 150 kilograms of cocaine and over 30 kilograms of heroin. During the investigation, authorities also seized approximately 80 firearms and approximately \$50,000 in cash. The indictment also seeks a monetary judgement against the defendants, jointly and severally, in the amount of \$300,000, which represents the proceeds of their alleged illegal activity.

"Today's takedown of the hierarchy of the Texas Mexican Mafia clearly demonstrates once again that law enforcement in this country remain focused and extremely successful in decimating drug criminal organizations," stated Special Agent in Charge James D. Craig. "We investigate these groups from top to bottom and DEA remains dedicated not only to making arrests, but also to seizing their ill gotten gains to financially cripple their criminal activities in the community."

"In combating a criminal organization like the Mexican Mafia and other similar organizations, a combined effort by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies will always be successful. This latest effort proves that criminal conspiracies endanger all segments of society and only through effective partnerships can we stop their ill effects on our communities. Our community is well served by all of our efforts when safety of our citizens is of utmost importance. Coordination and cooperation always prove more effective than competition. In this our latest effort, criminal organizations are warned that our efforts are ongoing," stated Bexar County Sheriff Ralph Lopez.

This Organized Crime/Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case resulted from a year-long investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force and the Bexar County Sheriff's Department with assistance from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The DEA Task Force is comprised of law enforcement officers from the Alamo Area Narcotics Task Force, San Antonio Police Department, Comal County Sheriff's Office, Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office, Kerr County Sheriff's Office, Kerrville Task Force, Leon Valley Police Department, New Braunfels Police Department, Schertz Police Department, Seguin Police Department and the Bexar County District Attorney's Office. Assistant United States Attorney Joey Contreras is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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The Mexican Mafia was formed in the early 1980's in the Texas prison system when predominantly Hispanic inmates banded together to protect themselves from predatory inmates during a period of turmoil and violence within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Over the years, the gang has focused its efforts to promote widespread criminal activity including narcotics trafficking, extortion and murder. Also known as "Mexikanemi" or "La Eme," the organization was the subject of a 1993 federal indictment which resulted in the conviction of Heriberto "Herb" Huerta, the then President of the organization, and a number of his fellow gang members on drug charges. In 1998, another federal indictment resulted in the conviction of Robert "Beaver" Perez, a Mexican Mafia General, and 15 other fellow gang members for their pattern of racketeering activity including six murders committed in 1994 and 1995 in the City of San Antonio and eight murders allegedly committed by gang members in 1997. The 1997 homicides included the shotgun killing of five people at a residence on West French Place on August 8, 1997.

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